

Greetings!

This is your Maintenance of Way Team update for January 15, 2016. Rain, fog, stubborn spikes, and perseverance punctuate the MOW Team's week. So, let's not get stubborn here by delaying this update any further!

To paraphrase the English novelist Edward Bulwer-Lytton, "It was a dark and stormy night; the rain fell in torrents — except at occasional intervals, when it was checked by a violent gust of wind which swept through the *building* (for it is in *the Erecting Shop* that our scene lies), rattling along the *rafters*, and fiercely agitating the scanty flame of the lamps that struggled against the darkness." Or something like that. Melodrama notwithstanding, Tuesday was wet. But, Pat Scholzen, Anthony Filamor, Joe Margucci, Frank Werry, Harry Voss, Gene Peck, Alan Hardy, and Heather Kearns stayed nice and dry. Pat and Anthony sorted and bagged a mountain of plastic bottles and aluminum cans, which have been accumulating over the past year, for recycling — the proceeds of which go to the MOW Picnic Fund. Earlier in the day, Alan picked-up the tamper's vibrators and vibrator motors that had been sent-out for repair, which Joe and Frank began reinstalling. These components needed to be mounted at the back of the tamper's work-heads in very tight spaces with little access for tools. But, they persevered and got the vibrator affixed. Anthony changed the tamper's fuel filter. Heather sought to relocate a switch on the control console of the ballast regulator. The switch for the locking mechanism for the regulator's broom and plows is located right at knee level and can be actuated accidentally without the operator realizing it — a design flaw to say the least. So, all in all, it was a productive evening inside the Erecting Shop despite intemperate conditions outside.

Thursday, Heather, Anthony, Paul Janssen, Matt McCracken, Joe, and Alan were met by calmer climatic conditions. Earlier in the day, Frank, Anthony, Matt, Joe, and Alan attended a forklift operations seminar and received their certifications as forklift operators. Congratulations! You're now official! In the evening, installations were the name of the game. Again, Joe found himself deep within the crevasses of the tamper's work-heads installing the new hydraulic motors for the tamper's vibrators. Anthony assisted Joe. Matt finished up installing a signal bell on the Interpretive Handcar Program's motorcar. Heather and Paul installed a new battery in the ballast regulator. Then, the Team headed over to Boiler Shop to fuel the Big Green Machine. Anthony took *Verde Grande* outside where Heather and Matt tapped a drum of diesel which Paul pumped into the tank. With that, the evening's festivities concluded — on a dry note.

Friday, the mighty MOW Weed Team commenced its 2017 season by deploying their spray-rig and taking-on weeds fouling the tracks in Old Sacramento. Mike Taylor, Ed Kottal, Dave Megeath sprayed nearly all of Old Sacramento from the UP interchange to Capitol Mall. In about 10 to 14 days, the budding green will turn yellow then brown. After taking on Old Sac., the Weedies moved on to the Shops where they sprayed much of the MOW materials yard west of the Boiler Shop. Overall, it was an excellent and quite productive way to start the Weed Team's 2017 season. Mike T., Ed, and Dave earned five gold stars each for their outstanding efforts.

It was a cold and foggy morning. But, a cool dozen of fresh doughnuts provided a warm welcome for Alan, Joe, Michael Florentine, Clem Meier, Matt, Steve Nemeth, Heather, Harry, Chris Carlson, Chris Machado, Ed Moriarty, Weston Snyder, and Frank on Saturday. The Team would spend the day dismantling the switch at the east portal of the Setzer tunnel. The SSRR's former freight client, Setzer Forest Products, has sold its compound east of I- 5 and demolition is well underway. The switch and its components — especially the frog and joint-bars — are far too valuable to be pulled-up as scrap by an unknowing demolition crew. Unfortunately, we were unable to access any of our track machines, such as the hydraulic spike puller, because the tracks in Old Sacramento were blocked by the rolling stock that normally resides at Baths. They were moved into Old Sac. at the behest of the Army Corps of Engineers that wanted them off the levy during the latest "storm of the century." So, Mike F. climbed on the Big Green Machine, Harry took out the backhoe, Weston piloted the trusty Chevy Truck towing the air-compressor while Heather picked-up a second flatbed truck. At the Setzer switch, Clem began by removing organic debris from around the switch-points. Ed M., Heather, Steve, Chris M., Mike F, Alan, Chris C., Weston, and Joe all worked at pulling spikes. Folks, spike pulling became our nemesis of the day. Frankly, we're not used to working with solid-oak hard-wood ties that are in excellent condition. They'd been sheltered by the tunnel and, over the past 40 or 50 years since the switch was built, the ties had fused with the spikes. Pulling spikes by hand with claw-bars is very hard on the wrists and shoulders. The Team worked tirelessly at pulling spikes but, this process took much longer than anticipated. Then, many of bolts were seized to the point that even the impact-wrench could not break the nuts loose. So, Chris M. sparked-up the portable torch and cut them off. It made for a little Fourth of July in January! By lunch, most of the joints had been freed, the switch stand un-spiked, the adjustable braces removed, and switch points detached.

Following lunch, while Alan, Heather, and Chris C. attended the new docent "Open House" in the Stanford Gallery recruiting for the MOW Team, the rest of the Team decided to focus on removing the vital components such as the control-rods, switch-rod, and heel-blocks. The rods were removed rather easily. But, the heel-blocks became another challenge. The converging rails need to be spread apart to get heel-blocks out. Again, our nemesis struck. Four lengths of rail needed to be un-spiked. At most ties, the rails were quadruple-spiked and the ties refused to release their grips. It became evident that there was a risk of injury should we continue. So, Mike F. brought in Big Green with the idea that we might be able to use its hydraulic power to separate the rails from the ties. Again, the spikes gripped the rails tightly but, it did loosen things sufficiently for the Team to remove enough spikes to spread the rails enough to disconnect one of the heel-blocks. By now, however, it was getting late. So, the Team collected all the loose parts and tools and loaded them in the trucks. Although we were unable to get the whole switch taken apart, the Team outdid itself despite the obstacles. We'll return next week when we'll be able to access our track equipment such as the hydraulic spike-puller. The good news is that, once we're done, we'll have a complete switch-kit — including switch-ties — ready to use elsewhere on our railroad.

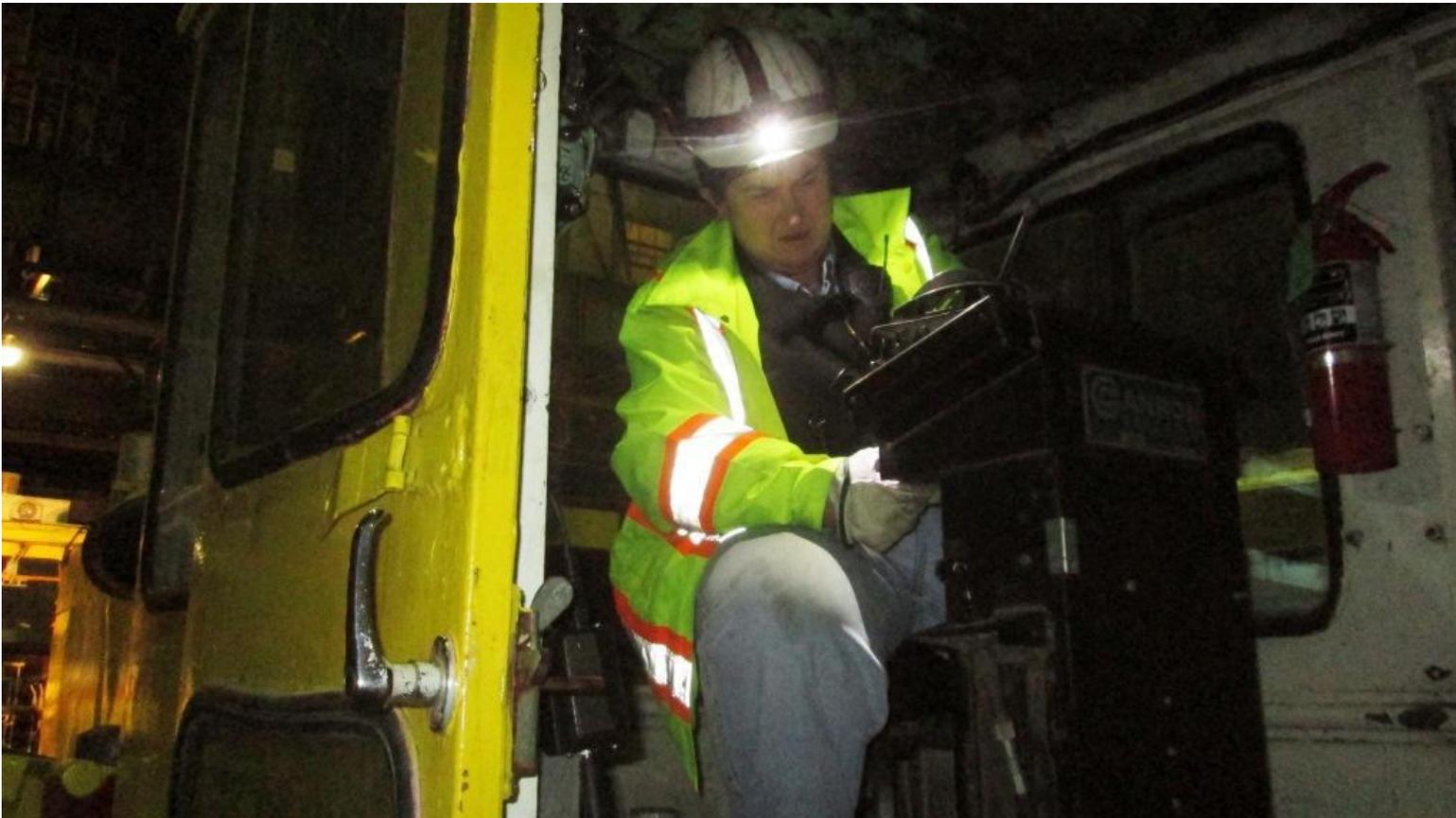
This coming week, the Team will gather as usual at or before 5 o'clock in the Erecting Shop on Tuesday and Thursday. Saturday, the call-time is 8 o'clock a.m. We'll finish dismantling of the Setzer switch. The Team showed great persistence with its work on the switch. They did a fantastic job under challenging conditions. Many thanks to everyone for your tremendous dedication to building a better railroad!

See you out on the line,

Alan, Chris C., and Richard.



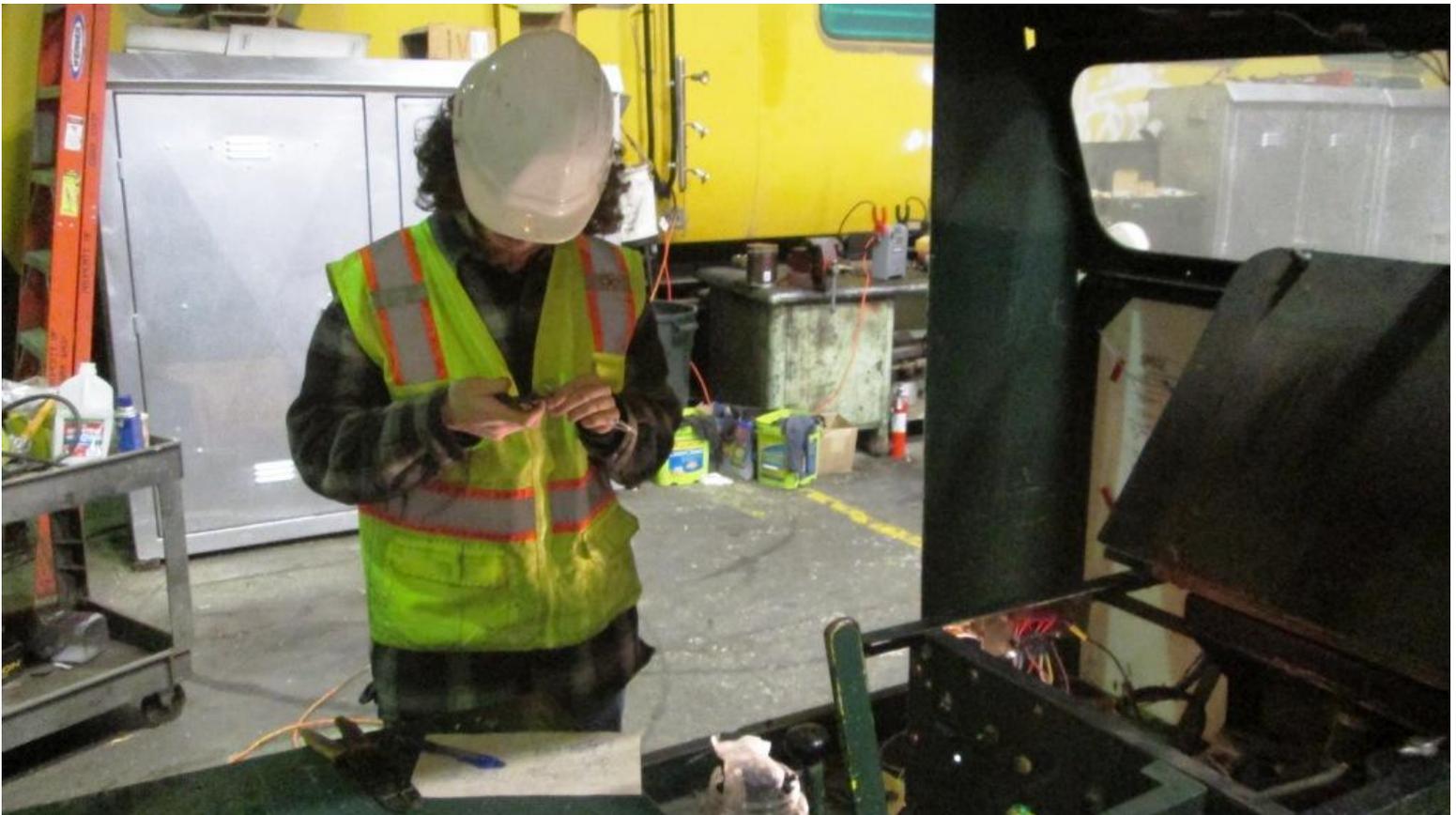
Anthony and Pat sort bottles and cans for recycling – and, our picnic fund



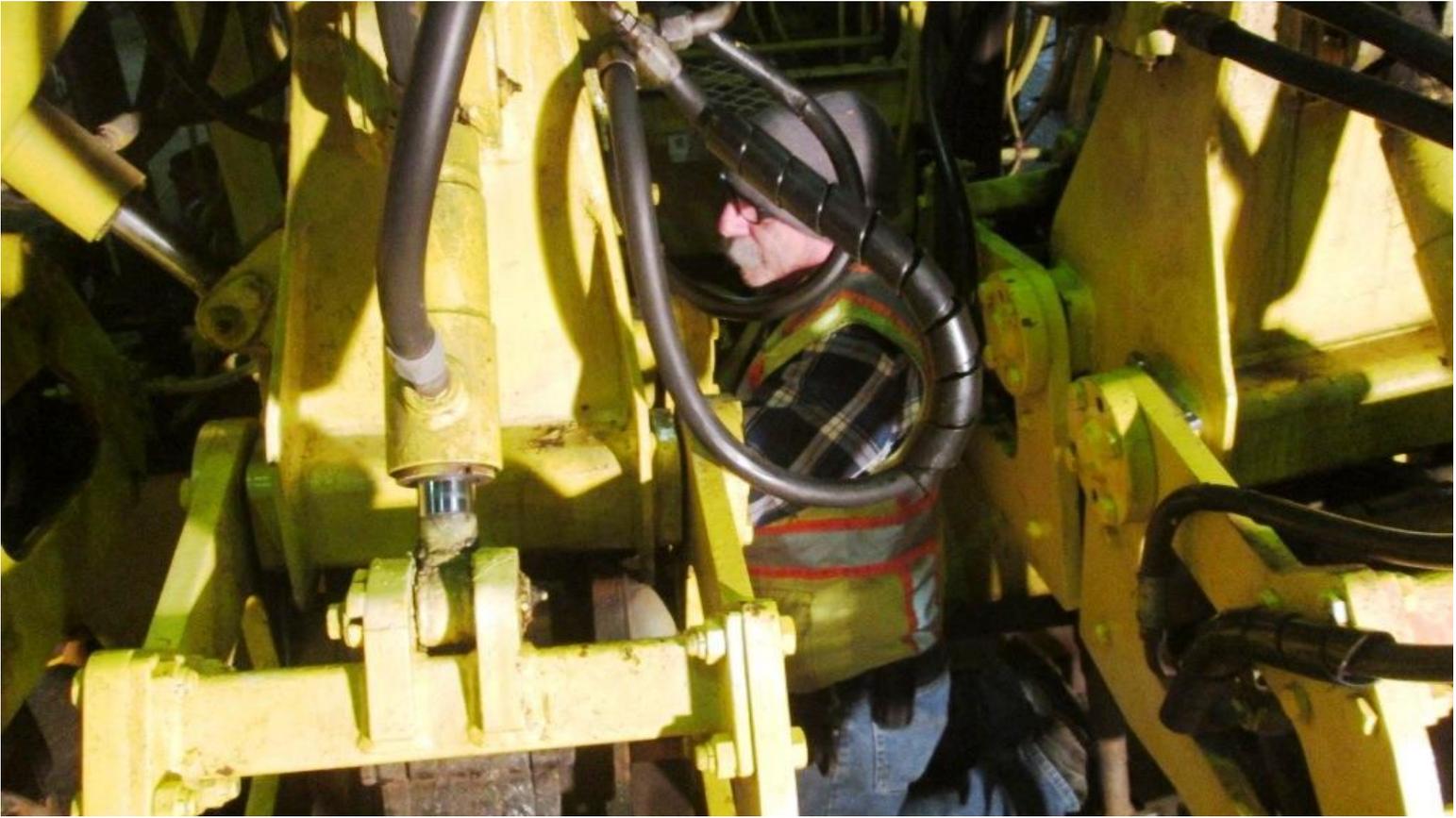
Heather works to relocate the plow and broom locking switch on the control console of the ballast regulator



Anthony changes the tamper's fuel filter



Matt works on the wiring of the bell on the Interpretive Handcar Program's motorcar



Joe installing the vibrator motor on one of the tamper's work-heads



Paul filling the Big Green Machine's diesel tank



The MOW Team's parade ready to hit the road



Ed M. and Heather pull spikes at the Setzer switch frog



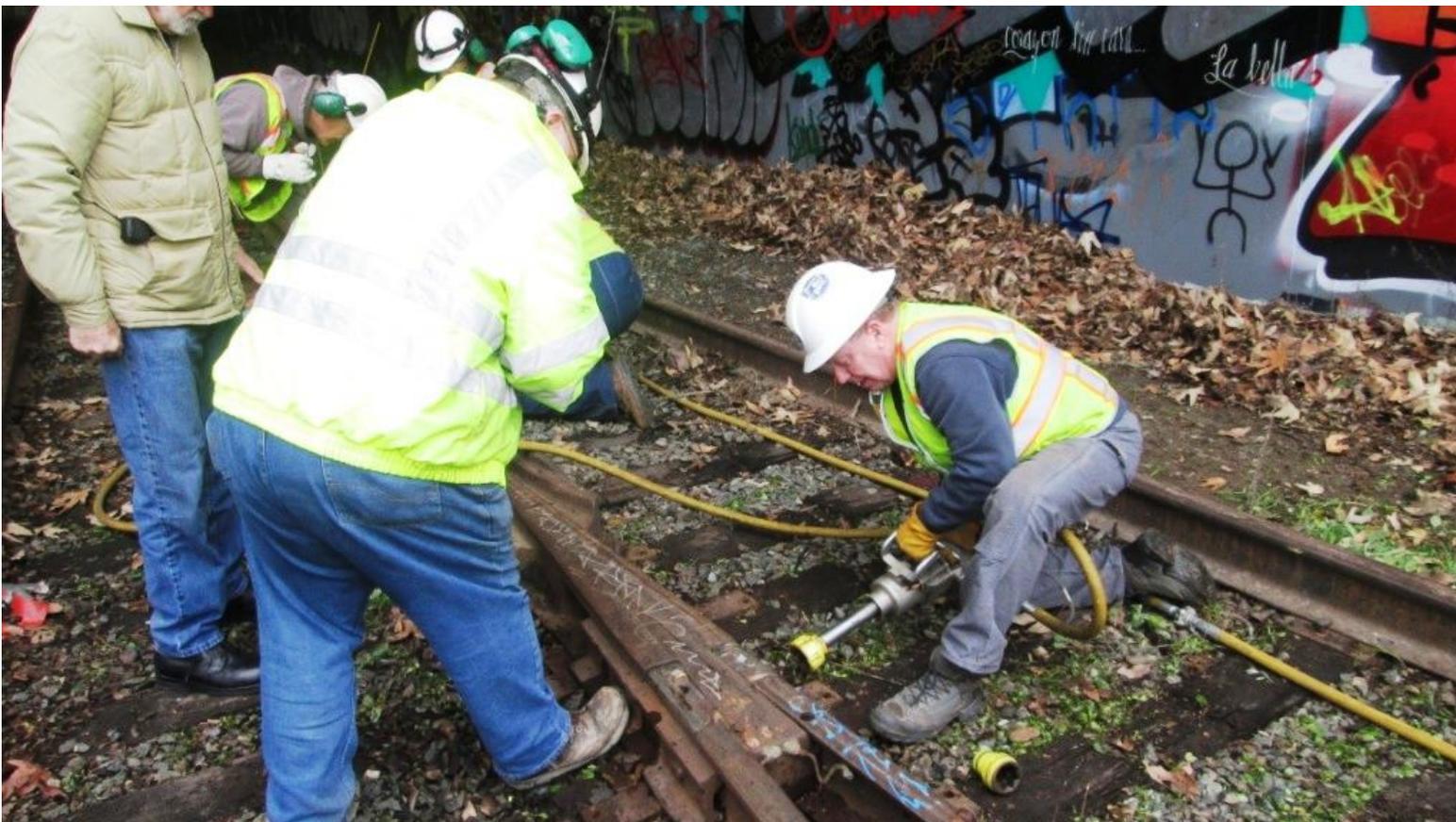
Chris M. employs the sledgehammer to drive the spike lifter, which Alan is holding, under the head of a spike



Steve and Clem start unbolting the frog from the rail



Now Heather and Weston use the spike-lifter to pry-up a spike



Frank holds the head of a bolt with his foot while Ed M. uses the pneumatic impact wrench to take the nut off



Chris M. torch-cuts a frozen bolt off the frog...



...And then cuts another



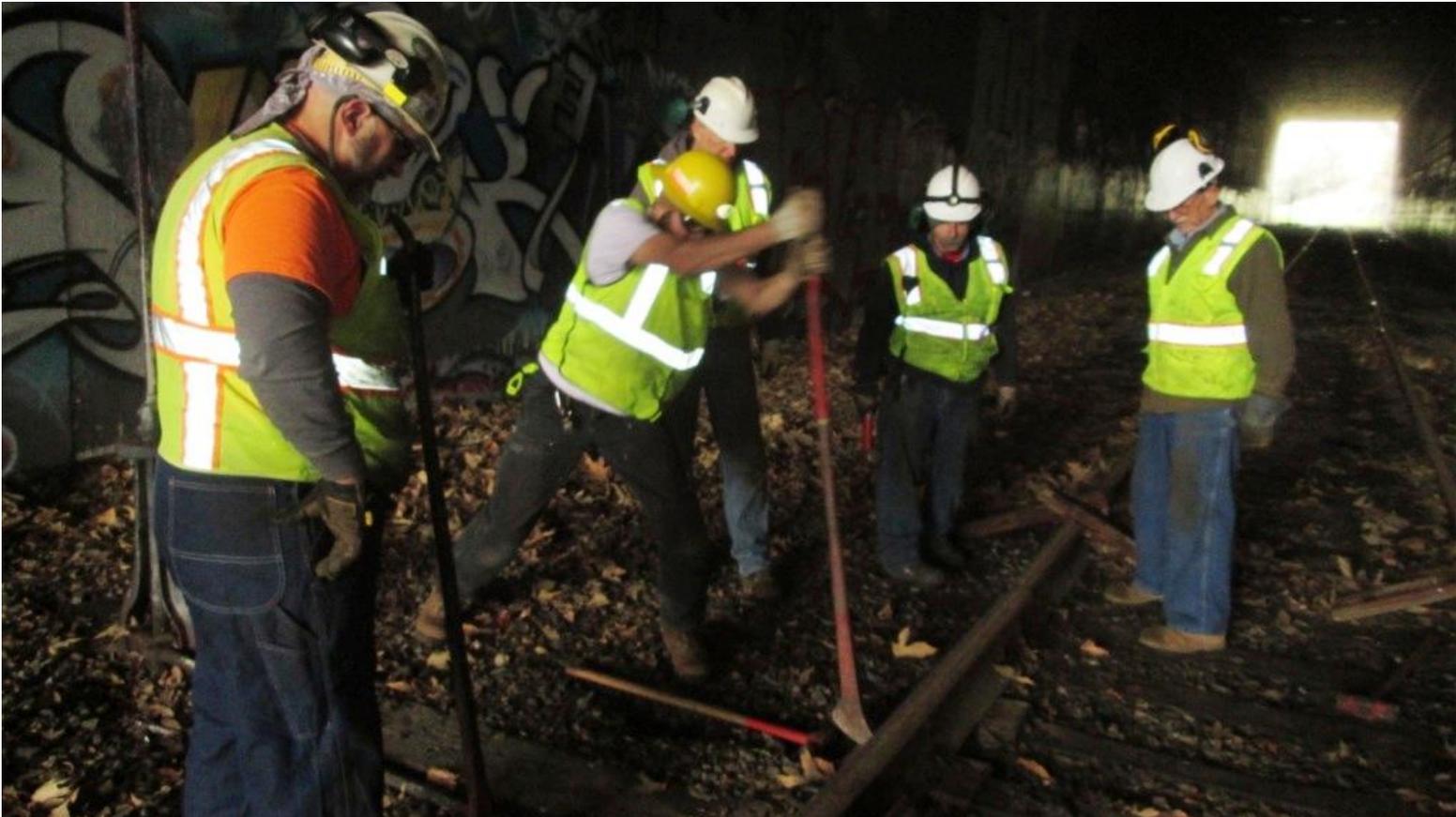
Chris M. stands in triumph after torch-cutting yet another bolt



Frank and Chris C. apply pressure to a bolt with track wrenches to stop it from spinning as Matt uses the impact wrench to remove the nut



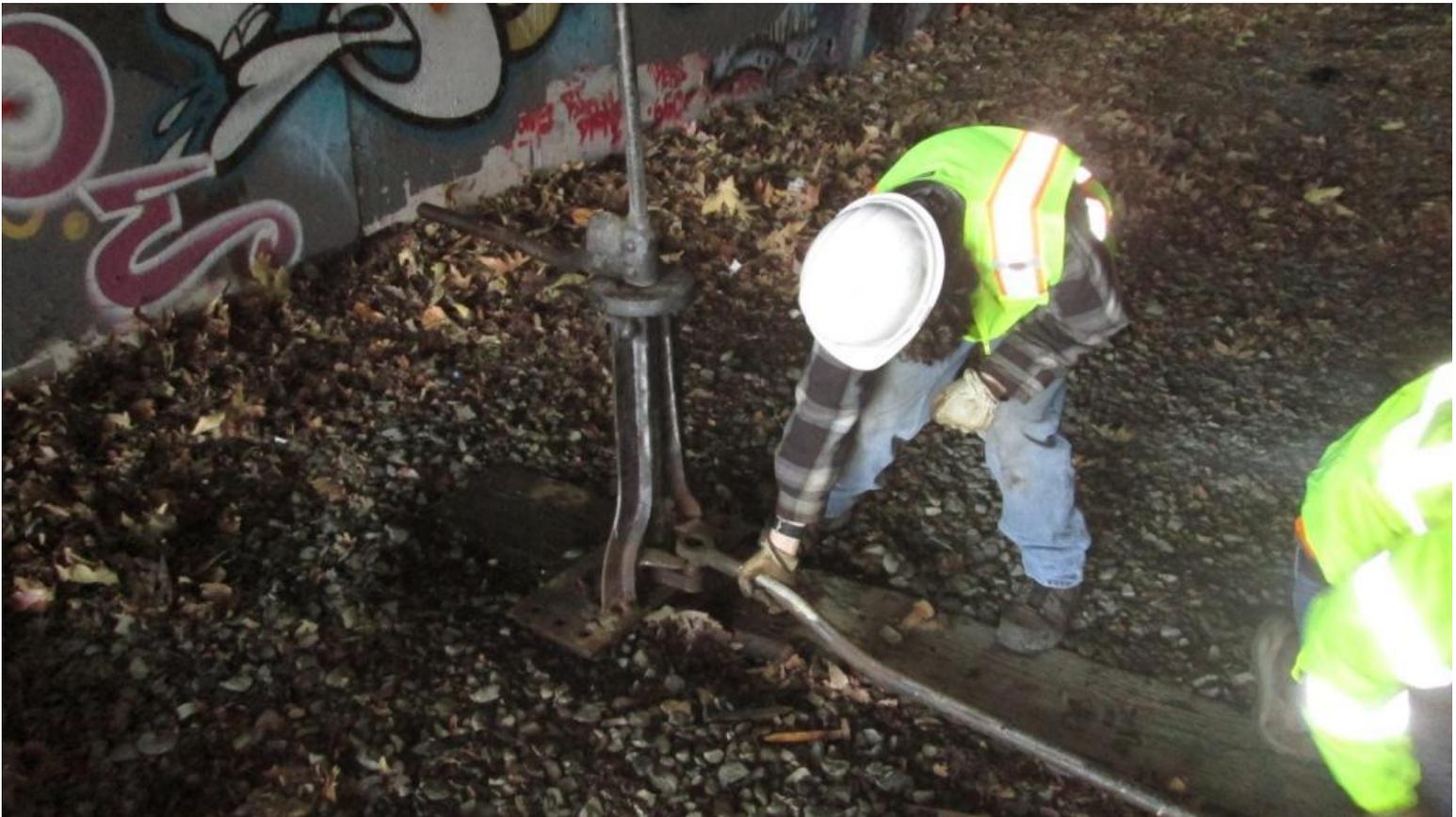
Joe holds the road-master on a spike to give Ed M. better leverage for pulling it



Chris M. gets rough with a very stubborn spike



Joe begins removing a connecting-rod by unbolting it from the transit-clip



Matt removes the switch-rod from the switch-stand



Now Weston pulls the other end of the switch-rod from the connecting-rod



Cue Mike F. on Big Green to lift the rails in an attempt to separate them from the ties



Mike F. loads a barrel containing switch components and the switch-stand onto the truck



Sadly, there's not much left of the Setzer facility...